printed are sent from the printer selecting device to the printer selected. In this configuration, one printer most advantageous in printing cost for the desired number of printings, which is an important factor for the selection of a printer is selected.

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-49 are pending in the present application. Claims 1, 5, 9, 11-13, 21 and 29 have been amended and Claims 37-49 have been added by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 7-13 and 17-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Aiello, Jr. et al; Claims 2-6 and 14-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Aiello, Jr. et al in view of Shibushawa et al; and Claims 21-36 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Aiello, Jr. et al in view of Shibushawa et al.

Claims 1, 7-13 and 17-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Aiello, Jr. et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Amended Claim 1 is directed to a printer selecting device including accepting means for accepting input information representative of a desired number of printings, selecting means for selecting a printer having a lowest printing cost from a plurality of printers matching with the desired number of printings, and data outputting means for outputting image data to be printed to the printer selected by the selecting means. Independent Claims 11 and 13 include similar features. The feature corresponding to a printing cost is similar to subject matter recited in Claims 12, 15, 23 and 31.

In a non-limiting example, Figure 1 illustrates a printing system 1 including three different types of printers, i.e., the laser printer 4, digital copier 5 and stencil printer 6. As for a printing cost for a single printing, the laser printer 4 and digital copier 5 each using toner do not noticeably vary. By contrast, the stencil printer 6 using masters and ink reduces the printing cost for a single printing with an increase in the desired number of printings. Therefore, at the present stage of development, the stencil printer 6 is lower in printing cost than the laser printer 4 and digital copier 5 for a given number of printers, e.g., ten or more printings (see page 7, lines 16-25). Thus, according to the claimed invention, a printer having a lowest printing cost is selected thereby reducing the cost of the desired number of printings.

The outstanding Office Action indicates Aiello, Jr. et al teach a selecting means for selecting an adequate one of a plurality of printers matching with the desired number of printings (i.e., the printing job's set-up) and cites column 2, lines 30-32. The outstanding Office Action also indicates Aiello, Jr. et al teach printing additional information including at least one of a printing cost for a single printing, a printing time and an image quality level and cites column 8, lines 45-55. Applicants note, however, that the information about a selected printer report discussed in column 8, lines 40-55 includes a job name, data definition name, form used, print date, print start time, print end time, total lines in the report and total pages printed as shown in Figure 25. There is no information concerning a printer having a lowest printing cost.

Further, regarding the print job's set-up information cited in column 2, lines 30-32, Applicants note Aiello, Jr. et al teach determining if a printer coupled to the print server has a set-up compatible with the selected print job's set-up (see column 2, lines 29-33). In more detail, while a print job is being received from a source computer, the Queue Manager

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accesses the print job's header information to determine which print resources are required to print the job and then accesses a resource manager 133 to determine if the required print resources are available (see Figure 5). Print resources include fonts, coded fonts, overlays, page definitions, form definitions, page segment comments, FCBs media maps, data maps, and graphics (e.g., logos and signatures). If a required print source is not available, then the Queue Manager notifies the operator through the GUI. Similarly, the Queue Manager checks for a required printer set-up, for example, that a required form type is loaded, and notifies the operator if a required printer set-up is not available (see column 5, lines 32-45). Again, Applicants note the required printer set-up does not correspond to selecting a printer having a lowest printer cost.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted independent Claims 1, 11 and 13 and each of the claims depending therefrom patentably define over Aiello, Jr. et al.

Claims 2-6 and 14-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Aiello, Jr. et al in view of Shibushawa et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 2-6, 14 and 16 (Claim 15 has been cancelled) depend either directly or indirectly on Claims 1 and 13, which as discussed above are believed to be allowable. Further, it is respectfully submitted Shibushawa et al also do not teach or suggest selecting a printer having a lowest printing cost as claimed by the present invention. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested this rejection also be withdrawn.

Claims 21-36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Aiello, Jr. et al in view of Shibushawa et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent Claims 21 and 29 include similar features to that as discussed above with respect to Claim 1. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested this rejection also be withdrawn.

In addition, new Claims 37-49 have been added to set forth the invention in a varying scope, and it is believed no new matter has been added. In particular, new Claims 37-49 are similar to Claims 1-5, 11-14 and 16-19, respectively, but have been drafted to not use means-plus-function terminology. It is respectfully submitted these claims are allowable for similar reasons as discussed above with respect to the other claims.

Further, the abstract has been amended to correct minor informalities and to conform to standard U.S. patent practice. No new matter has been added.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE CLAIMS

--1. (Amended) A printer selecting device comprising:

accepting means for accepting <u>input</u> information representative of a desired number of printings [input];

selecting means for selecting [an adequate one of] <u>a printer having a lowest printing cost from</u> a plurality of printers matching with the desired number of printings; and

data outputting means for outputting image data to be printed to the printer selected by said selecting means.

5. (Amended) A device as claimed in claim 3, wherein when said stencil printer is selected and displayed, said displaying means displays how much said stencil printer is advantageous in printing cost than <u>at least one of</u> the other printers <u>of the plurality of printers</u>.

9. (Amended) A device as claimed in claim 7, wherein when said stencil printer is selected and displayed, said displaying means displays how much stencil printer is advantageous in printing cost than <u>at least one of</u> the other printers <u>of the plurality of printers</u>.

11. (Amended) A printer selecting device comprising:

accepting means for accepting <u>input</u> information representative of a desired number of printings [input];

operating and displaying means for displaying on an operation and display section a plurality of printers together with printer-by-printer additional information <u>indicating at least</u>

a printing cost for decision and based on the desired number of printings in such a manner that any one of said plurality of printers can be selected; and

data outputting means for outputting image data to be printed to the printer selected on said operation and display section.

12. (Amended) A printer as claimed in claim 11, wherein said printer-by-printer additional information [include at least one of a printing cost for a single printing,] also indicates at least one of a printing time, and an image quality level.

13. (Amended) A printing system comprising:

at least one image data supply device for outputting image data to be printed;

at least one number setting device for setting a desired number of printings;

a plurality of different kinds of printers each being capable of printing the image data received from said at least one image data supply device; and

a printer selecting device comprising accepting means for accepting input information representative of the desired number of printings [input], selecting means for selecting [an adequate one of] a printer having a lowest printing cost from said plurality of printers matching with the desired number of printings, and data outputting means for outputting the image data to the printer selected by said selecting means.

21. (Amended) A printing system comprising:

at least one image data supply device for feeding image data to be printed;

at least one number setting device for setting a desired number of printings;

a plurality of different kinds of printers each being capable of printing the image data received from said at least one image data supply device; and

a printer selecting device comprising accepting means for accepting input information representative of the desired number of printings [input], selecting means for selecting [an

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adequate one of] a printer having a lowest printing cost from said plurality of printers

matching with the desired number of printings, and data outputting means for outputting the

image data to the printer selected by said selecting means.

29. (Amended) A printing system comprising:

at least one image data supply device for feeding image data to be printed;

at least one number setting device for setting a desired number of printings;

a plurality of different kinds of printers each being capable of printing the image data

received from said at least one image data supply device;

a printer selecting device comprising accepting means for accepting input information

representative of the desired number of printings [input], selecting means for selecting an

adequate one of said plurality of printers matching with the desired number of printings, and

data outputting means for outputting the image data to the printer selected by said selecting

means; and

displaying means for displaying the printer selected by said selecting means on a

display section;

said selecting means selecting, when said plurality of printers include a stencil printer,

said stencil printer if the desired number of printings is greater than a preselected reference

number inclusive.

Claims 37-49 (New).--

IN THE ABSTRACT

Please amend the Abstract at page 32, lines 2-11 to read as follows:

--A printing system including a plurality of different kinds of printers and a printer selecting device [therefore are disclosed]. The printer selecting device includes an accepting section for accepting information representative of a desired number of printings input, and selecting [means] section for selecting one of the printers matching with the desired number of printings. Image data to be printed are sent from the printer selecting device to the printer selected. In this configuration, one printer [adequate] most advantageous in printing cost for the desired number of printings, which is an important factor for the selection of a printer is [automatically] selected.--